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NRO REVIEW COMPLETED

20 March 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Development Branch, DED



SUBJECT: Placement of GPD Payload in COMCHA Series

PROBLEM:

To determine the best time for launch of the GPD package within the COMCHA series in order to make the best use of the cover that would accrue therefrom.

FACTS RELATING TO THE PROBLEM:

1. The remaining payloads for the COMCHA, ARCON, and COMCHA Prime program are as follows:
 - a. Five camera payloads of 1957 COMCHA series.
 - b. Four ARCON payloads for 1960.
 - c. Eight camera payloads for COMCHA Prime.
 - d. One GPD payload.
 - e. One biomedical payload programmed with possible camera substitute.
2. The photo season for intelligence camera shots is considered to be over at the end of October.
3. Press activity relative to true purpose of the DISCOVERER program is friendly; however, will become more speculative as re-entry techniques are perfected and SAKOS begins to fly.
4. The first SAKOS shots will not be recoverable.
5. The GPD payload is ready to fly.

DISCUSSION:

1. At present, press activity in its discussion of the DISCOVERER has apparently accepted the fact that the DISCOVERER series is the A & D program

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for the follow-on SAMOS and MIDAS reconnaissance satellite program. Specifically, the purpose of the program has been described in many articles as an effort to perfect re-entry.

2. The failure of the series to perfect re-entry has lent credence to the R & D cover of the program and this type of explanation should continue to suffice until re-entry has been successfully accomplished.

3. Successful launchings of MIDAS and SAMOS this fall might also promote speculation about the need for further R & D; however, the DISCOVERER series might still be justified as a continuing R & D effort exploring re-entry techniques which are different from those used in the first series of non-recoverable SAMOS vehicles.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. COMINT cover is presently holding us and will continue to do so until the re-entry feature of the program is sufficiently proven.

2. Evidence of the results of the test objectives of COMINT shots could be used to better advantage at a time when speculation about the true mission is more openly discussed than at present.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the GPD payload be flown at a later date when COMINT cover deteriorates, hopefully, after the summer photo season.

SIGNED


Assistant Cover Officer
H-D

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